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Memorandum

TO: HONORABLE MAYOR AND
CITY COUNCIL

FROM: Albert Balagso

SUBJECT: 2008 GRAFFITI SURVEY

DATE: February 8, 2008

Approved

Date

2/12/08

INFORMATION

BACKGROUND

The Department of Parks, Recreation and Neighborhood Services (PRNS) conducted its first annual City-wide survey of graffiti tags in January 1999. Since that time, a survey has been conducted each year in an effort to evaluate the level of activity relative to the baseline established in 1999.

The purpose of this memorandum is to transmit the results of the 2008 graffiti survey.

ANALYSIS

The 1999 survey established a baseline of 71,541 tags¹. Since that initial survey, the number of tags identified by PRNS' Anti-Graffiti and Litter Program (AGLP) has steadily declined. The following chart summarizes this activity:

Year	Total Tags	Year	Total Tags
1999	71,541	2004	3,913
2000	35,744	2005	2,035
2001	10,498	2006	129
2002	5,612	2007	2,594
2003	3,827		

The success of the program has been due, in large part, to the effective coordination between City departments, volunteers and external partners such as VTA, County Roads and Airport, Probation, Cal Trans and the Santa Clara Valley Water District.

¹ Only markings or "tags" that were visible from streets were counted. It is important to note that tags on school properties, inside buildings, public restrooms and behind shopping centers and tags in alleys were not counted.

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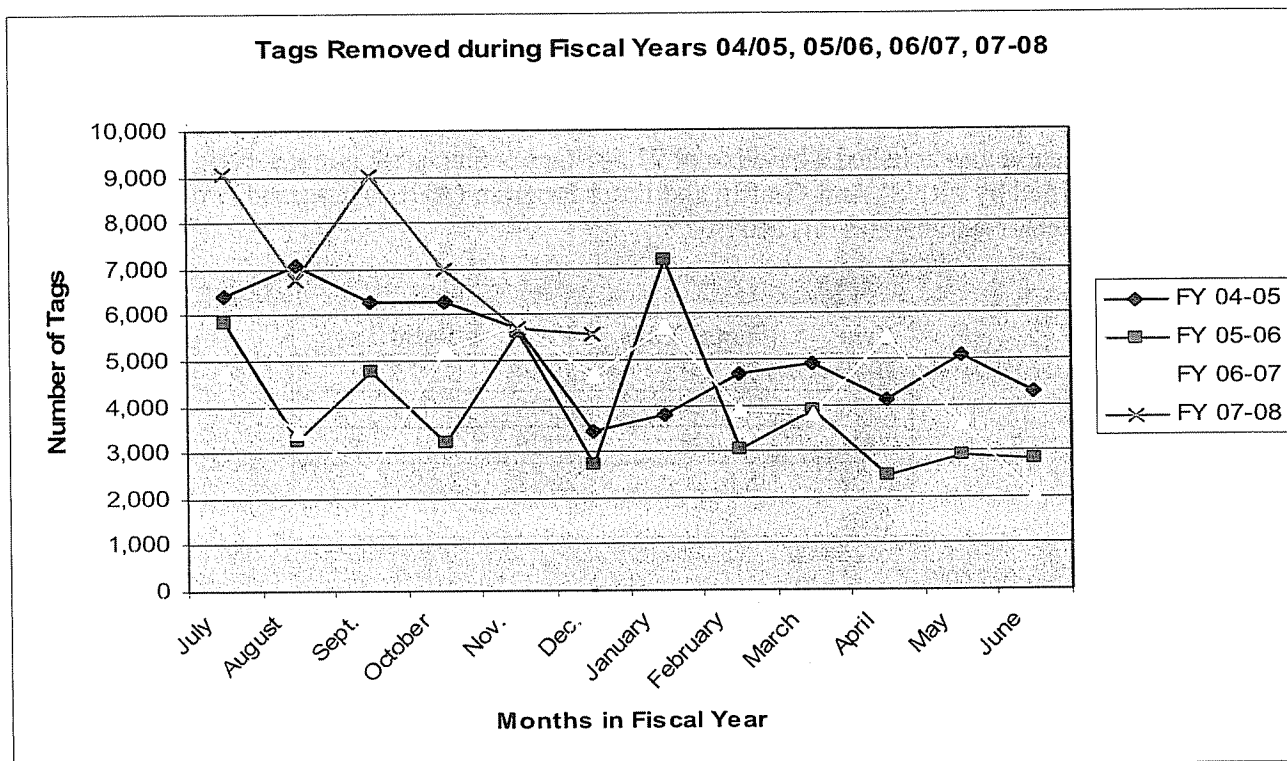
Over the years, this collaboration has enabled the City to ensure a broad continuum of services including community outreach, eradication and enforcement. City resources have been leveraged by the recruitment of over 3,000 community volunteers, the use of sentencing alternative programs and contract services in specific areas of the City (i.e., the downtown and Neighborhood Business Districts).

The 2008 survey results indicate that, despite these efforts, the City has experienced a significant increase in the level of graffiti activity. The most recent survey, conducted the third week of January 2008, identified over 13,900 tags.

An initial review of tags abated during the first 6 months of this fiscal year compared to the same time period last year indicates that staff removed almost 61% more tags this year.

The following chart provides a historical overview of the tags abated by PRNS over the past four years.


YEAR	TAGS ABATED (July – December)	ANNUAL TOTAL	SQUARE FT. REMOVED (July – December)	ANNUAL TOTAL
2007-08	43,159		244,380*	
2006-07	26,455	50,902	292,385	700,396
2005-06	25,489	47,863	173,915	400,268
2004-05	35,167	62,076	188,777	374,972



Due to the near doubling in the number of graffiti tags abated this year, it is clear that the overall volume of graffiti tags has increased so significantly that additional actions are necessary.

Staff is currently reviewing the statistics and meeting with stakeholders to identify factors that may have led to this increase. A new trend that has been identified is the tagging of high rise buildings in the downtown. This is problematic in that removal of this type of graffiti is the responsibility of the property owner. As a result, City staff must work with the Downtown Association and property owners to develop a more streamlined approach to graffiti removal. This effort is already underway and a community education plan will be implemented within the next 60 days.

A full report on the status of the graffiti program and actions that can be taken to address the recent increase in activity will be presented to the Neighborhood Services and Education Committee at its March 10, 2008 meeting. In the interim, staff is currently organizing a City-wide clean up effort that will take place the week of February 25, 2008. If there are particular areas of concern, please do not hesitate to call the 24-hour graffiti hotline at 408.277.2758.



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Director
Parks, Recreation and Neighborhood
Services